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HEAD START EVALUATION AND RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS. REPORT NO. VI, A FAILURE TO SHOW AN INVOLVEMENT OF CURRENT MOTIVATIONAL VARIABLES IN THE RESPONSE OF HEAD START CHILDREN IN THE ASSESSMENT OF INTELLIGENCE BY MEANS OF THE STANFORD BINET TEST.

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In order to investigate the effect of reinforcing subject responses to Stanford-Binet test items, regardless of whether such responses were correct or not, one-half of a sample of Head Start children were administered a standard Stanford-Binet test and the other half were administered the same test with the modification that responses were occasionally rewarded with M&M candies. Six months later the children were tested again under the two conditons. The average intelligence quotients for the two groups on the first testing were found not to be significantly different. This same resutl was found for the second testing. Thus, it appears that results from the Stanford-Binet test are insensitive to influences of possible interaction between subject responses and reinforcement or nonreinforcement of those responses. (WD)

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The University of Kansas Head Start Evaluation and Research Center

VI.

A Failure to Show an Involvement of Current Motivational Variables in the Response of Head Start Children in the Assessment of Intelligence by Means of the Stanford Binet Test

("The Reinforcement of Intelligence in Culturally Deprived Populations.")

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A Failure to Show an Involvement of Current Motivational Variables in the Response of Head Start Children to the Assessment of Intelligence by Means of the Stanford-Binet Test[1]

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The project was intended to show whether performance on the Stanford-Binet test of I.Q. could be increased by reinforcing response to the test items, correct or incorrect, with a tangible, edible, and more-than-social reinforcers, specifically, M&M candies. Head Start children were chosen as subjects, since (1) they are currently the target of an intensive program to improve their capabilities for dealing with American public schooling, (2) they typically do less well on the Stanford-Binet test than do children of middle or upper class origins, and (3) the Stanford-Binet is the prime criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of Head Start programs in accomplishing their goals.

Consequently, two testers gave Stanford-Binet tests in the standard manner to a randomly selected half of a sample of Head Start children; to the other half they administered the test as usual, except that they offered the child an occasional candy for responding. Half a year later, the children were re-tested in similar ways. Each of the two testers made approximately half of his tests in the standard way, and half with candy reinforcement.

All groups of children showed an approximate I.Q. of 90 as a result of the first testing; all groups showed an approximate I.Q. of 95 as a result of the second testing. Differences between the groups were negligible in amount and statistically insignificant. Thus, it appears that I.Q. derived from the Stanford-Binet test is insensitive to potentially reinforcing

contingencies between any reasonable response to the test and candy. To that extent (which is a slight one), it is not suggested that the I.Q. testifies more to a lack of motivation to answer, perhaps, characteristic of Head Start children being tested by the typically white and middle-class tester, than to a lack of the responses tapped by the items of test.

FOOTNOTES

1. The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the Office of Economic Opportunity, Executive Office of the President, Washington, D.C., 20506. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and should not be construed as representing the opinion or policy of any agency of the United States Government.

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